keeping in Touch
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES
May 1995

Making a Miracle from Tragedy: New Home for Fellowship!

It started as a necessity, grew to a possibility, and now looms as a near-certainty. The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan

COVER STORY

Community Churches and MCC Los Angeles, have made an offer to jointly purchase a complex of buildings in West Hollywood, California. The two separate structures would meet current needs of both while providing for future expansion.

Initially, the Fellowship headquarters will be housed in a portion of one structure, a five-story office building, with other parts leased on a commercial basis. Additional space in the building will be utilized as it becomes available and as the requirements of the Fellowship expand. MCCLA, pastored by Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, will occupy a two-story structure next door that is currently being used for retail sales.

The offer to purchase culminates a long process of seeking for both the Fellowship and MCCLA. The Los Angeles-area earthquake of January, 1994, destroyed the building that had housed the church, and which was within months of being completed after eight years of construction and financial struggle. Concurrently, the Fellowship had long been searching for space that was affordable to buy that would replace its present marginal rented facilities.

"Because of the tragedy, Rev. Wilson and I started to dialog about how the situation could be turned into one of opportunity," explained Rev. Elder Troy Perry. "Nancy and I dreamed together about finding property which could house us both."

A year's search ended in April, when the General Council of UFMCC toured the property and granted a committee powers to negotiate on its behalf. Concurrently, the Board of Directors and congregation of MCCLA approved the participation of the church in a joint venture with the Fellowship. Both groups met and framed a working agreement stipulating a 50% shared ownership and responsibility situation. Plus, the specific details of an offer that contains sufficient contingencies for safety and ultimate approval by both groups was drafted. The elements of that offer were presented to the owners of the structures, who accepted it in late April. The sale price is $3.8 million.

The complex is located prominently in the heart of West Hollywood, a city that millions of gay/lesbian and bisexual people visit each year. It's nearly-new steel construction conforms to all current earthquake standards and provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act. It's location on Santa Monica Boulevard makes it one of the most visible structures in the entire area.

"For MCCLA, this is a very powerful moment." reflected Rev. Wilson. "Our congregation is still working through the shock and grief of our loss. We see God's hand in making this new day possible."

Each entity will contribute 50% of the $1 million down payment. The day after the General Council voted to make the offer on the property, the Fellowship was informed by an attorney that the estate of a former member of De Colores MCC in Los Angeles included a bequest in the sum of approximately $150,000 or more.

"I believe that this is God's way of telling us we did the proper thing in making the offer on this property," responded Rev. Perry. "I believe with all my heart that this property will help us as we move into the next millennium, to model health, wholeness, and holiness to the community that God has called us to reach."

Rev. Perry has established a group he has named

Rev. Perry is encouraging individuals to be one of "The 500" who make this dream a reality. He reminds us of the Conference theme: "All things are possible . . "

"The 500" who are being sent a personal solicitation, and specifics about being involved in the funding of the Fellowship's portion of the down payment. This group will be invited to meet privately with Rev. Perry in Atlanta at Conference.

"It's my intent to walk into General Conference later this year with most of the money needed in hand. I believe there are 500 visionaries in this Fellowship .

FLORIDA

Church Celebrates Pastors

King of Peace MCC in St. Petersburg, Florida, has been a church in celebration lately. The church finds itself healthy, strong and growing following the eight-month tenure of Interim Pastor, Rev. Carol West and the recent election of new Senior Pastor, Rev. John Gill.

Following several months without a Pastor last year, King of Peace brought in Rev. Carol West, from the Cathedral of Hope MCC in Dallas, Texas, as Interim Pastor last September. During her eight months with King of Peace, much healing and hope was restored. On Easter Sunday, Rev. West was presented with a special commendation from Rev. Judy Davenport, Southeast District Coordinator, for her outstanding work as "a leader and healer" at King of Peace.

Members of the congregation also dedicated a new sanctuary stained-glass window in Rev. West's honor. Her service at King of Peace was concluded on April 23, with a farewell reception and many special gifts.

At a special congregational meeting held in March, an overwhelming majority vote elected Rev. Elder John Gill as the new Senior Pastor for King of Peace. Rev. Gill has been Senior Pastor at MCC of the Resurrection in Houston, TX for nearly ten years. He completed his service there on April 29 and will begin work at King of Peace on June 1.

FEEDBACK

Policy on "Sexual Misconduct"

The General Council invites UFMCC members to give their input on the following motion that was passed by the General Council as a First Reading, that will be submitted for final adoption as Second Reading at the October 1995 council meeting. Please submit any written responses to the clerk of the General Council through the UFMCC International Headquarters by Aug. 15, 1995.

95.03.GC.38 FIRST READING: Move to adopt the following definition for "Sexual Misconduct" and "Pastoral Relationships", as contained on the "Sexual Misconduct Background Form".

Sexual Misconduct is defined as:

a. Sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent; or

b. Sexual harassment in a situation where there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including but not limited to, sexually-oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or repeated requests for social engagements; or

c. Sexual exploitation, including but not limited to, the development of or the attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a clergyperson, employee or volunteer and a person with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual.

Pastoral Relationship is defined as:

A relationship between clergyperson, employee or any volunteer and any person to whom such a clergyperson, employee or volunteer provides on an individual basis counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance, or from whom such clergyperson, employee or volunteer has received confession or confidential or privileged information of a personal nature.

DISTRICTS

Schedule of District Conferences

Southeast District Florida	Nov. 3-5, 1995 Deerfield Beaches,
Northwest District	May 26-29, 1995
Gulf Lower Atlantic District	Nov. 17-19, 1995 Asheville, N. Carolina
Australia District	Jan 25-27, 1995 Brisbane
WCE - New Zealand	Oct. 13-15, 1995 Auckland
European District	Nov. 25-27, 1995 Kent, England
Western Canada District	May 19-22, 1995 Winnipeg, Manitoba
Eastern Canada District	Sept. 22-24, 1995 Toronto, Ontario
Northeast District	Nov. 3-5, 1995
Mid-Atlantic District	Nov. 1-2, 1995
Great Lakes District	May 17-19, 1996 Chicago, Illinois
Mid Central District	May 25-28, 1995 Des Moines, Iowa

UPDATE

Freedom Ride Postponed

Postponement of the Memorial Day weekend Freedom Ride to Ovett, Mississippi was announced on Apr. 26 by planners of the event, Rev. Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of UFMCC, and Robin Tyler, prominent lesbian activist. They expressed regret that the attempt to come to the assistance of Wanda and Brenda Henson and their efforts to keep Camp Sister Spirit alive and well in the face of terrorist-type threats and vilification has been made necessary by an insufficient number of persons planning to participate.

The Hensons are the developers of Camp Sister Spirit, 120 acres of woodland outside Hattiesburg, Mississippi designed to provide a safe space for lesbians. The lesbian couple's dream has become the focus of ongoing harassment and death threats by people in the area.

Planners of the Freedom Ride, Rev. Troy Perry and Robin Tyler, who originally called for and emceed the first March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, expect to reschedule the event early next year.

MAY 1995

Keeping in Touch is a monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We are a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation.

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Send address changes, news and ideas to: *Keeping in Touch*, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd, #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; (213) 464-5100. Deadline for each issue: 15th of previous month.

Editorial Board:
Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Moderator
Mr. Ravi Verma, Director of Administration
Rev. Kittredge Cherry, Editor

Ms. Nancy Fackrell, Typesetting
Norm Mason, Graphic Concept

Troy Perry, in announcing the postponement, said "It saddens me that we have been unable to respond to this critical need. It is our intention for this project to succeed, and for that to happen we need more time. We are asking everyone to rally to this important cause and plan to be present in Mississippi when this event happens next year."

TEXAS

Miracle Sunday for Trinity MCC

Beverly Bennett

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1, NIV).

Trinity MCC's 102 members in Arlington, Texas, exceeded their six-week $24,000 "Miracle Sunday" Campaign Drive and netted over $30,000 in their offering that culminated on Easter morning!

On the kickoff Sunday six weeks before Easter, Rev. Crisco asked each person in attendance to give $100 beyond their usual tithes to what she designated "Miracle Sunday" on Easter morning. She told the congregation that a $24,000 safety net was the only obstacle standing between Trinity and the opportunity to launch a bond sales campaign to build the new church home.

On Easter morning, much to everyone's amazement, Trinity did more than raise the requested $24,000. The grand total, with 99% of it in cash and checks not pledges, currently stands at $33,600.

Trinity MCC in Arlington demonstrated that big miracles still happen in small places. The congregation is still reeling from the success of Easter Sunday. A new visitor said, "This was my first Sunday here, and I believed."

Counting the few thousand dollars raised during the six week fundraising drive, "the board of directors shed tears of joy as they announced the final total of $33,600 for Miracle Sunday."

Even Rev. Crisco voiced amazement at the results of "Miracle Sunday." "I never dreamed I'd do this the way we did it. One Sunday morning I heard myself say from the pulpit that we'd raise $24,000 by Easter and call it "Miracle Sunday". Now, I am Miss Conservative: I don't normally leap out into thin air. So I caught myself thinking, 'Who said that?' Then I realized the voice I heard was my own! In retrospect, I believe the spirit of God moved us to take this next step towards the land," said Rev. Crisco.

"I think we just all believed it could happen. The people at Trinity put their hearts and souls into this," reports board member, Tom Reddick.

Rev. Crisco acknowledged her own anxious moments during the six week campaign. "There were points when my heart would stop beating, and I'd imagine how it would be if we didn't make the goal. I'd ask God to surely not let me make that big a fool of myself! The consensus from my colleagues from other churches was that I was either incredibly stupid or a person of great faith, and Easter Sunday would tell the tale," Rev. Crisco chuckled.

Rev. Crisco said never in her wildest dreams did she imagine Trinity would exceed the $24,000 goal. "I was going to be so grateful to God and our congregation if we even came close. To raise over $30,000 took my breath away. I think I'm still in shock. I'm not sure if the reality has sunk in yet. I can only say that I have the best congregation in the world. Well over 95% of this money came from people within the church. I am so proud to know that I have a people of such great faith. I feel very honored to be their pastor," Rev. Crisco said.

Long time charter member, Naomi Coleman said, "This is no more of a miracle than God moving on the hearts of a small group of gays/lesbians 11 years ago to form Trinity MCC, and it further proves what we've known all along. God not only owns the cattle on a thousand hills, but God owns the gold under those hills. The only restriction that we have in accessing God's riches is the limitation of our own faith."

UPDATE

But not such a great Friday . . .

As this issue is being completed, word has been received that on Friday evening, May 5, a major storm ripped the roof off the building of Trinity MCC in Arlington. The offices are badly damaged through wind and tremendous amounts of water.

It is unclear at this time whether the building can be rebuilt or whether it is a total loss. The congregation will be meeting at a local motel, and has stored church property until a determination can be made as to the condition of the building.

The phone is working with voice mail capability. Donations may be sent to Trinity MCC, 331 Aaron Avenue, No. 125, Arlington, Texas 76012.

MEMORIAM

Carol Wooten

Carol Wooten, a member of MCC London, was the European District Lay Representative, and was actively involved in the Womens Secretariat, including serving on the planning committee of last year's Leadership Conference. She died suddenly on February 27 by causes unknown, perhaps brain hemorrhage. She was 35 years old, and is survived by her spouse, Carol Woods, a mother, a sister, and many friends.

Rev. Dan Brauer

Rev. Dan Brauer, pastor of Muskegon MCC, died of carbon monoxide poisoning in early March. His death was ruled accidental by the local medical examiner. His illness occurred over a period of three weeks as a result of a faulty hot water heater. He had seen a physician shortly prior to his death and had been given a diagnosis of indigestion. Rev. Brauer had previously served as pastor of MCC Grand Rapids, Michigan.

FLORIDA

Christ MCC Raises Money for its Own

Lesbian comedienne / songwriter / singer Suede led a parade of talent at Christ MCC's "That's What Friends Are For" concert on Miami Beach on April 8th. The concert, attended by some 300 persons, raised more than $10,000 to help Christ MCC parishioner Judy Craig with her medical expenses.

Judy suffered a brain aneurism last fall while she and her partner Cathy were on a cruise ship in the Bahamas. She had to be airlifted back to Miami via Coast Guard helicopter. Though she made a miraculous recovery, her unreimbursed medical expenses totaled more than $40,000. Intensive therapy still to come is certain to cost thousands more.

"It was great to be able to put our money where our mouth is and to do something at the local level to directly benefit someone we know and love" said Rev. Michael Nikolaus, pastor of Christ MCC. "Obviously, we were thrilled at the opportunity of organizing the event and ecstatic at the outcome."

TEXAS

Live On-Line Circles of Hope

Several members of the Cathedral of Hope MCC, Dallas, Texas, have started a live online Circle of Hope for lesbian and gay Christians. The Circle of Hope meets on a weekly basis in a private room on AOL. They call themselves COHEC (Cathedral of Hope Electronic Circle).

The purpose of the group is to provide a time for spiritual nurturance, a time for reflection/sharing of feelings and thoughts, and a time for personal support and encouragement. Prior to the meeting each member of the group is sent a copy of a brief lesson plan by e-mail which outlines the topic for discussion. Each lesson consists of an ice-breaker question or exercise, an overall statement of the lesson topic, three to five Bible scriptures related to the topic of discussion, and discussion questions.

If anyone is interested in joining the Circle of Hope or would like more information on the group, please forward a message to the user name COHEC on AOL or you may call the Cathedral of Hope MCC at (214) 351-1901 and ask for Rev. Irene Travis, Director of Small Group Ministries at extension 198.

DISTRICTS

I.I.C.H.E. Accepts the Great Lakes District

The Indiana Interreligious Commission on Human Equality (IICHE) recently voted to accept the UFMCC Great Lakes District's application for membership.

For twenty-six years, IICHE has been working to eradicate racism and inequality and promote the value of diversity in the state of Indiana. Membership includes Baha'i, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Unitarian Universalist judicatories.

The only negative vote was cast by the Northern Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Rev. Cass Weisman will represent the Great Lakes District on the IICHE Board.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Discover Atlanta

Cynthia A. Marquard

For many people attending General Conference, this will be their first visit to Atlanta. This Southern city is filled with history, hospitality, and plain old fun. The Conference headquarters at the Westin Hotel on Peachtree Street is in a wonderful location. The hotel lobby has many sitting areas perfect for quiet conversation. There are several dining areas in the hotel, though they might stretch the budget. Within a two-block area around the hotel are almost 20 other eating establishments, beginning with McDonald's right across Peachtree. Kitty-corner from the hotel is Atlanta's Hard Rock Cafe. Pop, juice, and snacks can be purchased at a small Woolworth's in the next block of Peachtree between the Hard Rock

AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP

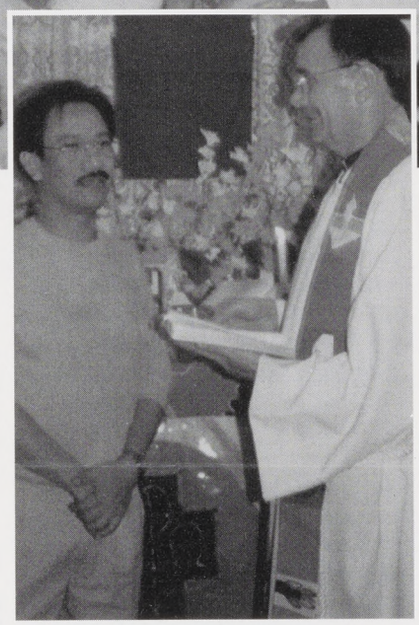
Praises

Congratulations to **MCC San Francisco**, CA, who celebrated their 25th Anniversary. **Rev. Elder Troy Perry** attended their anniversary celebration to share in the joy of the congregation and their pastor, **Rev. Jim Mitulski**. ■ **Rev. Gordon McCoy**, Senior Pastor of **Church of the Resurrection MCC**, Chicago, IL, has been named to the Board of Directors of GLAAD Chicago (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation). ■ Congratulations to **Redeemer MCC**, Flint, MI, who celebrated their 15th Anniversary in April. It also was the 15th Pastoral Anniversary of **Rev. Lin Stoner** who's last Sunday was Apr.9. ■ **St. Jude's MCC** of Wilmington, NC, was chosen as an interior location for a TV movie filmed in Wilmington recently. "Sophie and the Moonhanger" will be seen on the Lifetime channel sometime in November. ■ **Vicky Kolakowski**, Student Clergy of **New Life MCC**, Berkeley, CA, was honored by the City of Berkeley's Commission on the Status of Women (COSOW) as an Outstanding Woman of Berkeley on May 10th, along with 14 other women. ■ Congratulations to **Holy Covenant MCC**, Hinsdale, IL, who celebrate their 20th Anniversary on May 20-21. ■ **Rev. Ivor Holmans** was inducted as clergy in UFMCC in April, with a celebration given by **MCC Brisbane**, Australia. The service was officiated by **Rev. Greg Smith**, Australian District Coordinator. ■ Many Praises for **Rev. Elder Hong Tan**, London, England, who received his MBA this month. ■ Congratulations to **Rev. Dee Dale**, pastor of **MCC Louisville**, KY, and her spouse **Judy Dale**, Great Lakes District Coordinator, who celebrated their 8th Anniversary on May 13. ■ Congratulations to Rev. Elder Troy Perry, founder and moderator, and his spouse **Phillip DeBlieck**, who will celebrate their 10th Anniversary on June 1. ■ Praises for UFMCC staff member **Elsa S. Martinez**, who was interviewed by Spanish Network Univision about lesbian/gay bashing in Los Angeles, CA.

AROUND THE FELLOWSHIP

Prayers

Darrol Stephens, spouse of **Rev. Bob Arthur**, Mid-Central District Coordinator, was admitted to the hospital on Apr. 10 with pneumocystis (PCP). Our prayers and thoughts are with Darrol and Bob. ■ Prayers for all our family and friends who were affected by the bombing in **Oklahoma City**. ■ **Rev. Ron Gee** of California, whose mother has had a stroke needs our prayers of support. ■ Prayers are requested for **MCC of the Rockies**, Denver, CO, and their pastor, **Rev. Charlie Arehart**, as Rev. Arehart has announced his resignation as of Aug. 19, 1995. ■ Keep the **UFMCC Headquarters Office** in Los Angeles, CA, in your prayers as the offices were burglarized twice in one week. Precautions have been taken and we appreciate your prayers. ■ **Rev. Ken Martin**, MCC Austin, TX, is currently in reconciliation dialogue with his ex-wife, and his now twenty-five year old son whom he has not seen in eighteen years. ■ Prayers for **Rev. Caroline Blanco**, pastor of **Centre De L'esprit Liberateur**, Paris, France, she is recuperating at home after open heart surgery.



Members of MCC Manila. Below, Rev. Ed Paul and Edgar Mendoza, who will assume leadership of the church when Rev. Mickley retires in July of this year.

and The Mall Food Court.

Getting Around – For those who drive, parking will not be a problem. The hotel is surrounded by parking lots in all directions, and 24-hour parking can be had for under $10.00 per day.

For those who fly in, we recommend taking the clean, quiet MARTA rapid transit train from the airport to Peachtree Center, one block from the Westin. MARTA bus stops and train stations are easy to spot because they have multicolored symbols that look strikingly like the gay/lesbian flag.

Underground Atlanta and Coke – The biggest single tourist spot is Underground Atlanta, where overpasses were built in the 1930's and 40's to avoid the train tracks that seemed to run everywhere. After the overpasses were built, the stores moved up to the new street level. Now, the original buildings down below have been turned into candy stores, coffee bars, restaurants, and specialty shops. Antique trucks are parked permanently at the curb. Underground Atlanta is about a seven block walk from the Westin.

Adjacent to Underground Atlanta is the wildly popular World of Coca-Cola, the beverage that made Atlanta famous. This giant shrine to Coke offers films of Coke history, antique ad displays, a bottling sculpture, a Coke tasting room, and - of course - a shop where you can buy Coke-wear.

Gay and Lesbian Nightlife – We were very pleasantly surprised at the quantity and quality of the gay nightlife. To start with, there are several gay or gay friendly restaurants. There are two bars in Ansley Square (a shopping mall quite a distance from conference headquarters), Spectrum and Scandals. The big men's bar downtown (an easy walk from the Westin) is Velvet, with a hefty $7.00 cover, and the Levi and leather bar is called The Eagle.

Atlanta also has a really great women's bar, The Otherside, not far from Ansley Square.

The two local gay/lesbian newspapers, The Southern Voice and ETC are the places to check for current bar listings and events during the week of General Conference.

WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION

Success in Philippines

Mr. Edgar Mendoza will be the new lay pastoral leader of MCC Manila, Philippines, when Rev. Richard Mickley retires, July 31, 1995. Edgar was one of the first people Rev. Mickley met in the Philippines, and he was one of the first members of MCC Manila.

Rev. Ed Paul, who has been in Manila for the past six months, was very excited about the possibilities for MCC Manila. He reported that with Edgar and the Board of Directors working together there is great potential for the Church. Rev. Paul believes Manila might well be the springboard to other Asian and Pacific Rim Countries.

On behalf of the Board of World Church Extension and the Administrator, UFMCC extends heartfelt thanks to Rev. Paul, and blessings and gratitude to the founding pastor, Rev. Richard Mickley.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Advertise in GCXVII Book

Want to advertise in a publication with worldwide distribution? The Program Booklet for General Conference XVII in Atlanta promises to have the widest distribution to date.

Advertising space is going fast. The back cover, inside back cover, and inside front cover have already been sold. The advertising rates for the space left are as follows:

Full page $125; Half page $75; Quarter page $50; Business card $25.

For mechanical specifications and other information, call Dana Cagle at 213/464-5100.

CHRONICLES

Top 20 Tithes

1. Cathedral of Hope MCC, Dallas $7,518.03
2. MCC of the Resurrection, Houston $3,921.29
3. Sunshine Cathedral, Fort Lauderdale $2,756.16
4. MCC Washington, Washington, D.C. $2,124.37
5. MCC Toronto, Toronto $1,860.15
6. St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville $1,811.75
7. MCC of the Rockies, Denver $1,646.23
8. King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg $1,485.02
9. MCC Key West, Key West $1,363.59
10. MCC Los Angeles, Culver City $1,347.55
11. Joy MCC, Orlando $1,190.28
12. MCC San Francisco, San Francisco $1,175.98
13. Gentle Shepherd MCC, Phoenix $1,131.36
14. MCC Long Beach, Long Beach $1,093.63
15. MCC Richmond, Richmond $1,051.12
16. Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston $1,022.19
17. Church of Our Savior MCC, Boca Raton $1,007.60
18. All God's Children MCC, Minneapolis $ 983.57
19. MCC New York, New York $967.53
20. MCC Tampa, Tampa $951.97

(These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's monthly income that is reported to Fellowship headquarters.)

Top 20 Per Capita

1. Muskegon MCC, Muskegon $65.00
2. Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston $35.25
3. Exodus MCC of Abilene, Abilene $28.37
4. Open Arms MCC, Rochester $27.13
5. Holy Covenant MCC, Hinsdale $26.94
6. Spirit Eagle MCC, Spring Valley $26.88
7. MCC in the Ozarks, Springfield $26.77
8. Gentle Souls MCC, Kansas City $26.31
9. Faith Eternal MCC, Springfield $25.40
10. St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville $25.16
11. New Life MCC, Charlotte $23.18
12. MCC Los Angeles, Culver City $22.88
13. Christ the Liberator MCC, New Brunswick $22.31
14. MCC of the Ozarks, Fayetteville $21.69
15. MCC Ocean of Life, Costa Mesa $21.62
16. Harvest MCC, Denton $21.60
17. MCC Key West $21.58
18. MCC of the Resurrection, Houston $21.17
19. MCC Long Beach, Long Beach $21.11
20. Lexington's MCC, Lexington $20.80

(These figures reflect the average individual weekly offerings to the local church)

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TO ORDER CALL **UFMCC RESOURCE CENTER** 213/464-5100

CHRONICLES

Transitions

Rev. Patricia Leffler was installed on March 12 as Pastor of Christ Chapel MCC, Santa Ana, CA. ■ **Rev. Elder John Gill** has accepted the pastoral call of **MCC in St. Petersburg**, FL, and concluded his pastorate at **MCC of the Resurrection**, Houston, TX, on April 30 after 91/2 years of ministry there. ■ **Rev. Sherry Hilliard** has been called to a six month interim Pastorate at **Exodus MCC**, Abilene, TX.

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma MCC Churches Report Terror

Rev. Kaye Lee, ***Pastor New Horizon MCC and*** **Rev. John NIcholas,** ***Pastor Lighthouse MCC***

We begin with thanks that none of the members of either Oklahoma City church lost their lives, although one member was made homeless by the event. However, once we move away from our immediate circle the picture changes dramatically.

We have received calls from friends in the extended community of the churches that let us know in no uncertain terms that it wasn't going to be easy for members of our congregations, any more than it was going to be easy for the rest of Oklahoma City.

One woman who came to the church for the first time last month lost her lover in the blast, as well as her home. Another friend of the church lost his father and was himself injured. The editor of the Gayly Oklahoman knows of three and possibly five other individuals who are presumed dead.

One woman, who accidentally called one of the fundamentalist churches because it had the word "community" in the name was told that it served her right if she lost a friend in the blast, since "you're all going to hell anyway."

One bright spot in the whole mess has been the number of calls of support from all over the country and the prayers that we have felt from all over the planet. We have been in receipt of a steady stream of calls of concern, offers of help, and assurances of prayer on our behalf. You can be sure that we are keeping track of all the offers of support and will make timely use of them when the time comes.

In cooperation with one another, we are establishing a fund that will offer relief in our community. Donations and support may be sent to New Horizons MCC, Post Office Box 12457, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73157.

HIV/AIDS FEEDBACK

So What Gets Me Through?

Rev. Andy Sidden ***Pastor, Spirit of Life MCC, Holiday Florida***

Sitting in my church office late on a Friday afternoon, I can hear a friend folding Sunday bulletins, a comforting sound for a sole pastor who relies on volunteer office help. A computer screen displays a just-completed press release, announcing Pride Month activities. Nearby, this week's sermon lies in a stack to be copied for the worship signer. A deacon stops by with clean vestments.

Dozens, probably hundreds, maybe even thousands, of things need my attention. But for now, I take time to think - sometimes this seems like a luxury - time to ponder a question posed weeks ago by the AIDS Ministry newsletter of the UFMCC, ALERT. The question is

certainly a valid one, "What Gets You Through?" - one that I have asked myself over the past few years of ministry.

Actually, the question seldom leaves my mind. My own aches and pains make sure of that. Even now, my head hurts from tension or AZT or some combination of both. A dull, familiar pain located behind my left eye - I can live with this and I do. My right leg throbs from nerve damage caused by DDI or AIDS or some combination of both. Lately, I drag the leg, particularly early in the morning or late in the evening. I can live with this, too. I can get by, and I do.

Our denomination's AIDS Ministry newsletter has asked how. How do MCC ministers, both clergy and lay "get by"? More precisely, ALERT wants to know "What Gets You Through?" The hope is that by sharing our experiences - by showing our scars - we can strengthen one another.

What gets me through? The answer is deceptively simple. I no longer rely on my own power, because, without God, I have so little power.

That is abundantly clear as I pastor Spirit of Life MCC, a growing church in Holiday, Florida, and as I deal with my own illness. It is abundantly clear as I help 70-some individuals serve the needs of ranching and retirement communities north of Tampa Bay. It is abundantly clear as I cash my disability checks and strive to hold on to health insurance coverage. It is abundantly clear as I remember people I love who are with Jesus, as I minister with people who grieve and as I watch countless others suffer the ravages of disease. It is abundantly clear as I hug my spouse, hating the virus within him, and as I dress for worship, donning the vestments of a friend who lives in heaven.

Without divine intervention, so little is possible. With divine intervention, so much occurs. Without divine intervention, the unknown is terrifying. With divine intervention, the unknown is acceptable. Each day holds its own challenges and its own rewards. I get through by the power of God.

What gets me through? The answer is extraordinarily complex. The Almighty has placed me in a world filled with mysteries. What gets me through today may not be enough tomorrow. What get me through is sufficient for today, I await tomorrow's blessings. I trust in the One who sends all blessings.

The power of the Creator is displayed most vividly in the creation and I bask in its wonder. I smell rose buds, orange blossoms and ligustrum blooms, and I praise God. I hear children at play, our choir in song and birds in the morning, and I praise Jesus. I see moonlight through the cypress, spider webs in the shrubbery and young animals with their mothers, and I praise the Holy Spirit.

As I deal with earthly death, I surround myself with life: a gentle old cat of 16 and her younger feline friend who loves to cuddle, 10 tropical fish with feathery fins of various shades of gold, including one skinny danio who disappeared for two weeks only to reappear on Good Friday; a yard full of cardinals, blue jays, roses, camellias and petunias, and a community full of ponies, calves, cypress and oaks. Life - so precious - gets me through. For in it, I witness the power, strength, beauty, courage, gentleness and even humor of God.

As I deal with earthly death, I surround myself with life: a gym with weights and muscles and endorphins and groans and sweat - a display of vitality, power and energy so excessive that it borders on tacky. Here, I find peace, and as a bonus, a bit of control, or at least the illusion of it, over my own body. And I get through.

As I deal with earthly death, I surround myself with life: a Sunday schoolteacher the age of my son; a precious little boy's hand lighting a memorial candle; retired couples who celebrate decades of love by reaching out to sick young people; a teen-ager with a rap song about "homeboy" Noah; a 47-year-old man accepting Jesus for the first time; a children's Sunday School with mouths open wide for communion and a Body of Believers that takes seriously Christ's call to feed my sheep. And I get through.

As I deal with earthly death, I recognize how precious eternal life is. A teenager's mother interrupts me to ask the time and day for HIV testing. A woman in her 70's stops by with newspaper clippings that'll serve as sermon illustrations. Sunday attendance sets a record of 107 souls. And I get through.

I need to prepare a sacrament of Baptism for a 7 year old boy. I need to prepare for tomorrow's care group meeting: how do I bring scripture to life for people who communicate through sign or for a young father who has lost his sight or for migrant workers who struggle, not only with AIDS, but poverty and racism? Today's challenges await.

And I get through. My Creator has blessed my life with meaning and purpose. For today, that is enough.

CHRONICLES

Farley Peterson Resigns

Farley Peterson, UFMCC Administrative Assistant for Financial Affairs, has resigned his position with the Fellowship effective June 1, 1995.

Farley has been employed by UFMCC since October of 1986, and has managed all accounting functions during that time. As a former auditor of tax-exempt organizations with the U. S. Internal Revenue Service, Farley brought great skill and insight to his work. He transformed UFMCC accounting from a simple manual system to fully computerized procedures, with necessary internal controls. His legacy will continue to serve the Fellowship for many years.

Farley and his spouse, Kevin Foxworth, have made plans to move to the Kansas City area. Their plans: "Find jobs! Quickly!"

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BOOKS/PUBLICATIONS

FREE! UFMCC Resource Catalog - The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is offering the new RESOURCE CENTER CATALOG, featuring new Books by MCC authors; new brochures and certificates; new and exciting items; and materials by Gay and Lesbian Christians! Please write or call: UFMCC Catalog, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; or call (213) 464-5100; fax (213) 464-2123.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Assistant Pastor sought by MCC Washington. Full time position. Person with Christ centered commitment, good interpersonal, administrative skills a must. Send resume with references to: MCC Washington, 474 Ridge St., NW, Washington, DC 20001 by May 30.

Energetic and experienced spiritual leader needed for strong and stable congregation at MCC New Haven. Full time position with excellent compensation package for licensed and ordained pastor. Church has focused mission statement, annual Ministries Plan, committed lay leaders, stable finances, and over 16 years of service to the community. Letters of inquiry should be forwarded to: Pastoral Search Committee, 566 Whalley Ave. #10, New Haven, CT 06511. All inquiries kept confidential.

MCC Pueblo is seeking a part time Senior Pastor who will help us grow to support a full time cleric. Please send resume to MCC of Pueblo, Search Committee, P.O. Box 1918, Pueblo, Colorado 81002.

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